

Appln. No. 10/044,281

Preliminary Amendment dated May 23, 2003

REMARKS

Claims 1-29 are pending in this application. Claim 1 has been amended to correct a minor error ("opening" has been changed to ---port--) and claims 12-29 have been added.

Claims 1, 12, 13 and 20 are independent.

Support for the foregoing claim change and new claims can be found throughout the application as filed.

Prompt and favorable consideration are respectfully requested.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

In compliance with the duty of disclosure under 37 C.F.R. § 1.56 and in accordance with the practice under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.97 and 1.98, the Examiner's attention is directed to the document listed on the enclosed Form PTO/SB/08a.

It should be noted that the cited item is a Second Office Action in Chinese Patent Appln. No. 99108016.5, which is a counterpart to the instant case. Both of the references applied in that Office Action, GB 2315045 and GB 2314809, already are of record in this application, and so have not been cited again. Applicants have provided the Examiner with the Office Action because it may be of interest to the Examiner to see how this art was treated in counterpart cases.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to confirm that this document has been considered by returning to Applicants' undersigned attorney a copy of the accompanying Information Disclosure Statement by Applicant form (PTO/SB/08a).

To the best of the undersigned's knowledge, this Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement is being filed prior to issuance of a first Office Action, and so is submitted in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.97(b)(3).

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Accordingly, no fee is believed to be due. If, however, the Commissioner determines otherwise, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any such fee, as well as any other fee which may now or hereafter be due, to Deposit Account No. 19-4709.

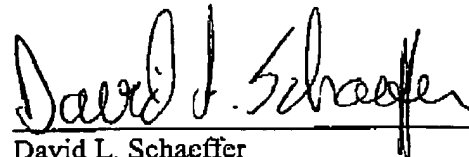
CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a diligent effort to place this application in condition for allowance and submit that the claims are in condition for allowance. If for any reason, however, the Examiner should deem that this application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below to resolve any outstanding issues prior to issuing a further Office Action.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any fee now or hereafter due in connection with the prosecution of this application to Deposit Account No. 19-4709.

Early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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